

# Editorial

## ETHICS AND DENTISTRY

Recently, Andhra Pradesh (AP) State Dental Council has served notice on six dental clinics for their actions contrary to the professional ethics. The notification has been widely publicized in print media. It is a right decision. Such action was overdue. The council supplies a copy of professional ethics as prescribed by DCI to all the registered graduates and obtains undertaking form to abide by the ethics. Unfortunately, majority of us do not follow the ethics. Rules remain on paper only. One may recall appearance of leading office bearers of IDA in TV advertisements of toothpaste. This is major lapse was committed by well-known practitioners.



AP State Dental Council shall take such cases to logical end without diluting or softening its stand. It is still better to identify specific breach of code of ethics in each case and proceed further. Cautioning public not to attend these clinics may not help much as the reasons for the same have not been spelt out.

I wish to reproduce the unethical practices as given in Dentist (code of ethics) Regulations 1976, published in Gazette of India, for the information of members of the profession.

### Unethical Practices

The following shall be unethical for a dentist, namely:

- a. Employment of a dentist in his professional practice of any professional assistant (not being a registered dental hygienist or a registered dental mechanic) whose name is not registered in the State Dentist Register to practice dentistry as defined in clause (d) of section 2 of the act.
- b. Styling by any dentist or a group of dentists his/ their 'dental clinic' or chamber's by the name of 'dental hospitals'.
- c. Any contravention of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 (23 of 1940) and the rules made there under as amended from time to time, involving an abuse of privileges conferred thereunder upon a dentist, whether such contravention has been subject of criminal proceeding or not.
- d. Signing under his name and authority and certificate which is untrue, misleading or improper, or giving false certificates, or testimonials directly or indirectly concerning the supposed virtues of secret therapeutic agents or medicines.
- e. Immorality involving abuse of professional relationship.
- f. Conniving at or aiding in any kind of illegal practice.
- g. Promise of radical cure by the employment of secret methods of treatments.
- h. Advertising, whether directly or indirectly, for the purpose of obtaining patients or promoting his own professional advantage.
- i. Acquiescing in the publication of notice commending or directing attention to the practitioner's skills, knowledge, service or qualifications, or of being associated with or employed by those who procure or sanction such advertising or publication through press reports.
- j. Employing any agent or canvasser for the purpose of obtaining patients, or being associated with or employed by those who procure or sanction such employment.
- k. Using or exhibition of any sign, other than a sign which in its character, position, and working is merely such as may reasonably be required to indicate to persons seeking them the exact location of, and entrance to, the premises at which the dental practice is carried on.
- l. Using of sign-board larger than  $0.9 \times 0.6$  m and the use of such words as 'teeth', 'painless extraction' or the like, or notices in regard to practice on premises other than those in which a practice is actually carried on, or show cases, or flickering light signs and the use of any sign showing any matter other than his name and qualifications as defined under clause (j) of section 2 of the Act.
- m. Affixing a sign-board on a chemist's shop or in places where the dentist does not reside or work.
- n. Insertion of any paragraphs and notice in the press and also the announcement of names in the trading lists and the display of their names or announcements at places of public entertainments, other than the change of his address.
- o. Allowing the dentist's name to be used to designate commercial articles, such as toothpaste, toothbrush, toothpowder, liquid cleaners, or the like or on circulars for such items, or permitting publication of his opinion on any such items, in the general or lay papers or lay journals.
- p. Mentioning after the dentist's name any other abbreviations except those indicating dental qualifications as earned by during his academic career in dentistry and which conform to the definition of 'recognized dental qualification' as defined in clause (j) of section 2 of the Act, or any other recognized academic qualifications.

- q. Using of abbreviations like (i) RDP for registered dental practitioner, (ii) MIDA for member, Indian Dental Association, (iii) FICD for Fellow of International College of Dentists, (iv) MICD for Master of International College of Dentists, (v) FACD for Fellow of American College of Dentists, (vi) MRSH for member of Royal Society of Hygiene, etc. and the like which are not academic qualifications.

These rules were made in early 70s, when information technology and resources were not available. In general, it can be said that these appear to be outdated to certain extent. Many of them stood the test of time. The profession has rapidly progressed. A number of practitioners have increased enormously. Competition has become tough leading to unethical activities. Nothing is spared by the practitioners to attract the patients. Publicity has become a fashion. Practitioners go to any extent in this aspect.

It is time that DCI looks into these and revise the code of ethics with severe penalties to those indulging in unethical practice.



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